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county and among the first to fall into decline and extinction in the days following the sugar boom. The remaining buildings of the Order are now used for quite a different purpose, which will be discussed later.

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the final flourishing of Vila Recôncavo and the beginning of its fall into obscurity. By 1700 the town was a thriving urban center--the newly created seat of local government, a military post, a highly active religious center, and the scene of the local courts of justice. In addition to large public buildings, imposing private residences dotted the streets, for many of the plantation owners constructed large houses in the town, which they used as stopping places in their journeys to and from their plantations and Salvador. Then as now, however, Vila Recôncavo was not the main center of attraction for the planters and their families, most of whom had houses in the capital where they spent the rainy seasons. Nevertheless, the presence of their large and ornate town houses gave a certain air of distinction and prosperity to the town.

The story of the decline of the town of Vila Recôncavo is symptomatic of what happened to many other towns in the region at a later date. Vilhena connects the decadence of Vila Recôncavo with the creation of the administrative center of Centro in 1727.[7] Until that time Centro had been a sitio (terminal designation for a small town), created in 1608. Toward the end of the seventeenth century the best lands of the Recôncavo, situated in what is now the county of Purificação, came into use as a result of the cessation of Indian attacks and of improvement in the machinery used in the plantations. Sugar mills powered by water no longer held as great an advantage as they had previously; over a hundred years of sugar-cane operation had pretty well stripped the littoral of the firewood necessary for continued high production; and by this time the coastal regions no longer held room for expansion. As the colonists pushed farther inland from Centro they found an abundance of the rich massapê lands and sufficient firewood for the needs of many plantations, and soon the number of inland sugar mills surpassed that of the coast.

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7. Luis dos Santos Vilhena, Noticias soteropolitanas e brasilicas, 1802, ed. Braz do Amaral (Salvador, 1922), p. 502.

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* 249 the responsibility of holders to colonize and develop their areas. The grants were as a rule very large, consisting of leagues of land rather than of acres. Only one grant could be made to a family. As a result the son of a man who was a holder of a grant either had to remain on his father's land or had to leave the province and go elsewhere to acquire land.
[425] The only remaining alternative was to forget about land and go into commerce or a profession. However,, since the grants were so very large, the original holders were able to break them up, selling or renting parts, giving some to their married sons or daughters and yet retaining and cultivating enough to support themselves. Thus the original land grants were broken up, and several plantations were made of each.

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313 Engenho was the name given to the total plantation, as well as being the specific designation for the mill itself. Every plantation, regardless of whether it was inland or on the coast, needed two things: the soil known as massapê, and woods as close as possible to the mill to supply firewood for boiling the
[185] sugar-cane juice. Firewood soon became a crucial problem, one which has haunted the sugar industry for centuries. Conservation never was a Brazilian practice, and the tropical forests of the Recôncavo were soon stripped to feed the hun-
[435] gry mouths of the furnaces. As time went on it became necessary to import firewood by boat from wherever it could be
[376] found, which added greatly to the costs of producing sugar. The steam mill came much later and added further to the problem.

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361 At first the owner's house was a veritable fort, surrounded by bulwarks and stockades to resist Indian attacks, but by the end of the seventeenth century the need for this precaution had passed away and the plantation houses were assuming noble proportions. Many were imposing two-story buildings built of stone and mortar, the ground level generally being used as a storehouse and the master (senhor de engenho) and his family living on the upper floor. As a rule the Big House of the Recôncavo was situated so that there would be an excellent view from the windows, not only of the mill and slave quarters nearby but of the surrounding countryside. There was no sight so dear to the heart of a plantation master as that of fields of sugar cane, the leaves of many shades of green waving gently in the breeze.

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[346] Frequently a chapel was connected with the house or built near it. Not very far away would be the mill, and nearby the

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gave sugar growing a great impetus by organizing expeditions of soldiers which he led into the farthest reaches of the Bay of All Saints, killing, driving out or enslaving the hostile Indian inhabitants, so as to make the area safe for settlers to move out of the city into the surrounding area and plant sugar. Mem de Sá himself built one of the largest and most productive of the sugar plantations in the Recôncavo.[2] His lands comprised three and a half leagues along the coastline of the Bay, extending four leagues inland, and two islands.[3] This *sesmaria*—as the early land grants were called—of Mem de Sá was broken down into smaller pieces by his daughter who inherited it, and by the end of the sixteenth century, most of the *sesmarias* of the Recôncavo had similarly, been divided into plantations averaging approximately 600 to 1,000 acres. In the past 250 years, many of these have kept the same boundaries and names, but their ownership has changed hands many times and they have passed through many cycles of prosperity and depression.

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The essential form of a plantation in the Recôncavo has changed little since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the past, the entire plantation was known as an *engenho*, taking its name from the sugar-mill building which was the heart of the plantation. There were two chief types of sugar mills, one operated by water power and the other driven by traction power supplied by oxen. Before the end of slavery, steam-driven machinery had also come into use. A typical *engenho* had four main items of wealth—its lands, its buildings, the livestock and the slaves. Most of the land was, of course, planted in sugar cane, but there were also wood forests to supply firewood, pastures for the livestock, and small areas devoted to the raising of food stuffs for the personnel of the *engenho*. The buildings of an *engenho* included the sugar mill, the *sobrado*, or home of the owner, and the slave quarters. The owner's house was frequently a very large and pretentious building with one and a half or two storeys. In the Recôncavo the landowners sought to build their houses *a meia encosta*, or against the side of a hill, giving the appearance of a two-storey house in front, but only one in the rear. Such homes were frequently constructed of stone, wood and mortar, with tile roofs. The slave quarters, which were known as *senzalas*, were generally long narrow buildings with sides of mud or *taipa* and and roofs of palm fronds. The livestock of a typical *engenho* consisted of oxen, burros, horses, sheep and cows. The oxen supplied the power to turn the grinding mills when there was no water power, and they pulled the large two-wheeled carts which were used to transport the cane from the fields to the mill. Horses and burros provided transportation for the plantation owner in supervising the work in the fields, and for him and his family for visits to nearby *engenhos* and to town. Cattle and sheep grazing on the portions of the land which were fallow supplied milk and meat to the plantation community.

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